

Message Text

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51

ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 EUR-12 NEA-06 ISO-00 ACDA-05 SAJ-01

CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MMS-01 OMB-01

TRSE-00 /073 W

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R 061330Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5559

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 16296

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PMOL, MARR, PARM, UK, IO, MP, IN

SUBJECT: INDIA'S REACTION TO UK DEFENSE REVIEW STATEMENT
ON DIEGO GARCIA

REF: STATE 264711

1. BRITISH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FRANK MILLS HAS TOLD US THAT
HE CALLED ON THE JOINT SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS RESPONSIBLE FOR WEST EUROPE (GHOKALE) ON DECEMBER
3 TO ADVISE OF HMG'S DECISION TO PERMIT THE USG TO EXPAND
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THE DIEGO GARCIA FACILITY. MINISTER MILLS TOLD US THAT HE

INFORMED THE MEA OFFICIAL THAT THE EXPANSION WOULD BE MODEST AND COMPLETED BY 1977-78. HE ALSO SAID HE HANDED OVER A SUMMARY OF DEFENCE SECRETARY MASON'S PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT.

2. THE BRITISH MINISTER FURTHER SAID THAT THE INDIAN OFFICIAL REPLIED TO THE EFFECT THAT THERE WOULD NOW BE A SPATE OF QUESTIONS IN THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT AND PROBABLY A FULL DEBATE. HE NOTED THAT HERETOFORE THE GOI HAD DEALT WITH QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BRITISH INVOLVEMENT IN DIEGO GARCIA BY STATING THAT THE GOI HAD MADE ITS VIEWS KNOWN AND THE MATTER WAS STILL PENDING IN LONDON. THE GOI COULD NOW NO LONGER DEAL WITH THE QUESTIONS IN THIS WAY, THE INDIAN OFFICIAL COMMENTED.

3. ALTHOUGH MILLS INFORMED US THAT HIS MEETING WITH THE MEA JOINT SECRETARY WAS ESSENTIALLY LIMITED TO THE ABOVE EXCHANGE AND "PLEASANT," PRESS TICKER THIS AFTERNOON QUOTES FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH AS SAYING THAT INDIA'S "TOTAL" OPPOSITION TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FOREIGN BASES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WAS EMPHATICALLY CONVEYED TO MILLS WHEN HE MADE HIS CALL. THE DESPATCH LEADS WITH A STATEMENT THAT INDIA HAS CONVEYED TO BRITAIN ITS "DEEP" CONCERN OVER THE BRITISH DECISION TO HELP THE US EXPAND DIEGO GARCIA. THE UK HIGH COMMISSION HAS REASSURED US THAT KEWAL SINGH'S REMARKS IN NO WAY REFLECT THE CONVERSATION MILLS HAD AT MEA.

COMMENT: THE GOI MAY HAVE DECIDED THE BEST COURSE IN DEALING WITH THE ISSUE IN PUBLIC IS TO APPEAR TO HAVE ALREADY PROTESTED, KNOWING NO ONE IN THE UK GOVERNMENT WILL CONTRADICT IT.

4. EMBASSY NEW DELHI HAS NOT TAKEN ANY INITIATIVE TO DISCUSS THIS SUBJECT WITH MEA OFFICIALS AND THEY FOR THEIR PART HAVE MADE NO COMMENT TO DATE TO US ABOUT THE BRITISH DECISION. IN FACT THE PRESS COVERAGE OF DEFENCE SECRETARY MASON'S OVERALL STATEMENT AND OF REACTIONS ELSEWHERE HAS THUS FAR BEEN LIGHT. THE HALF-DOZEN COMMENTARIES WHICH HAVE APPEARED IN THE DELHI PRESS HAVE RANGED FROM SHARPLY CONDEMNATORY OF THE BRITISH DECISION (IN THE COMMUNIST DAILY PATRIOT) TO THE COOLLY - STATED (BY STANDARDS HERE) CONCLUSION THAT NOTHING

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HAS REALLY CHANGED: "THE RECENT REACTIVIZATION OF CENTO AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A US NAVAL BASE ON DIEGO GARCIA MEANS THAT THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM GAN IN THE MALDIVES, FROM THE MAURITIUS AND SIMONSTOWN WILL NOT ONLY LEAVE NO VACUUM BEHIND BUT WILL NOT EVEN BE FELT" (INDIAN EXPRESS).
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